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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF THE COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

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The Pacific coast pilchard fishery, which is now in its fifth season of war-time operation, must pack five million cases of pilchards or Pacific sardines this season if war needs for this concentrated protein food are to be met, the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries reported today.

The goal of five million cases is considerably above the average season's production of the fishery and in only one year of its history - the 1941-42 season - has the industry exceeded the five-million-case mark.

To reach the season's goal, the Coordinator's office said, it will be necessary for the port of Monterey to pack 2,150,000 cases, San Pedro 2,100,000 cases, and San Francisco 750,000 cases. These quotas are all substantially in excess of the quantities of pilchards actually packed last year, and only by tremendous effort on the part of the entire industry can they be met, OCF officials said.

The pilchard fishery is the largest in the country and supplies about a quarter of the total tonnage taken by all fisheries combined. It is one of the principal sources of canned fish - only the salmon fishery provides a larger pack - and is also a major source of fish meal and oil for animal feeding and of industrial fish oils.

The pilchard fishery operated during the 1943-44 and 1944-45 seasons under a controlled production plan administered by the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries, and controls over the fishery are being continued this season because of the need of increasing the nation's production of protein foods.

The fishing season for pilchards opened August 1 at the northern California ports of San Francisco and Monterey and will open October 1 in southern ports. The season began with 32 vessels fishing out of San Francisco and 19 out of Monterey, both fleets being augmented since the opening day by arrivals from the northern fishing grounds in Washington and Oregon.

The pilchard fleet was seriously reduced in size early in the war but has now been restored through new construction and by return of many of the vessels formerly requisitioned for military service.

Elmer Higgins, Coordination Officer in charge of OCF's pilchard production program, said that the chief problem facing the industry this year is a shortage of manpower rather than boats. Several California pilchard vessels are expected to remain idle this season for want of crews, and many vessels are entering the season with crews of inexperienced men. A number of older fishermen who had retired from

pilchard fishing to less strenuous types of fishing have responded to the emergency and are helping to man the pilchard vessels, Mr. Higgins said.

The manpower shortage is also acute in the processing plants, especially in the Monterey area. In seasons of heavy production, enormous landings are made each day. These catches must be handled promptly to prevent spoilage of the fish. Lack of sufficient cannery help makes it necessary to divert fish to the reduction plants and cuts down the output of canned fish.

The canning of pilchards for direct food use is considered of first importance for war purposes because of the suitability of canned fish for overseas shipment and because of the high food value of the product. On the basis of the past performance and present facilities of the various canneries, the Coordinator's office has assigned a quota to each cannery which it is asked to meet or to exceed if possible.